

## **SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**May 19, 2014**

**4:30 p.m.**

The Clerk called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Corriveau, Shea, Shaw  
School Committee Members Connors, Staub

Absent: School Committee Member Ambrogi

Messrs: D. Livingston, K. DeFrancis, K. O'Maley

3. [Discussion regarding the School District budget.](#)

Alderman Corriveau stated Dr. Livingston, to start off it is my understanding that there's an understanding between the teachers' union and the school district. I'll just ask you a very general opening question: Where are we with that right now? I'm not necessarily asking you to divulge anything you legally can't, but perhaps if you could update us on where we are right now with the MEA.

Dr. Debra Livingston, Manchester School District Superintendent, responded we do have a tentative agreement with the executive council of the MEA. They are moving forward with bringing that to their members. They will bring it forward to a vote, from there it comes back to the school board, and from there we go to the mayor and board of aldermen.

Alderman Corriveau asked at this time do you have any sort of projected timeline when these various votes may or may not be held?

Dr. Livingston replied I think the goal is to bring that back to the school board next Monday.

Alderman Corriveau asked is the overarching goal to have a signed, ratified agreement in place before the adoption of a new city and school budget, which I believe is June 10<sup>th</sup>?

Ms. Karen DeFrancis, Manchester School District Business Administrator, replied we would expect the contract to be effective for July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Alderman Corriveau asked so this contract would obviously then have ramifications for the FY2015 budget?

Ms. DeFrancis replied correct.

Alderman Corriveau stated we have aldermen and school committee members here and we're both going to be working on our own budgets within the next couple of the weeks, certainly on the aldermanic side and the school board shortly after that. I know at last month's meeting I believe it was Alderman Shea who was asking what is the impact of a 15% health insurance employee contribution from the MEA, and by the way, thank you for the response. The response from the school district was that a financial analysis will be provided when an agreement is reached. Will that analysis be provided following a vote from the MEA or following a vote from the school board or when does that get into the hands of the budget makers?

Ms. DeFrancis replied we actually presented in non-public session the effect of the impact on the budget to the school board, however, I don't believe that would be information I could actually discuss until it is got brought forward to the BMA. We do have the financial analysis that has been completed.

Alderman Corriveau stated to sort of summarize, there is a tentative agreement and it's being voted on this week maybe by MEA membership that will be presented to the Board of School Committee on Monday and if the Board of School Committee adopts or ratifies it on Monday it would then go to the BMA for ratification. Is that the correct process?

Ms. DeFrancis replied that's correct, and when we bring it forward to the BMA we would also share the fiscal impact of those changes.

Alderman Shea stated I think it makes a lot of sense for us to wait until we find out exactly what the implications will be in terms of whether it's a plus or minus with the school department, but it certainly shows that there's progress being made and those of us that have sort of projected certain types of thinking have changed the thinking simply because of the cooperation that exists now, or will exist, hopefully if a budget is adopted. It is really a major concern from the City side regarding the implications from the contractual agreement that has been drawn up. Thank you for your hard work. I know the superintendent had mentioned that your team was working with the executive board of the MEA and we're all grateful for that. I think that it just leads to positive thoughts in terms of how we're going to structure a budget that is so short on the City side. Thank you for your hard work.

Dr. Livingston stated I would also add that this would be a week when the MEA membership looks at ratification. So I'm very hopeful but at the same time we're assuming that everything is moving forward, and I just wanted to make that clear.

Alderman Corriveau stated I have one other question about the budget. Will the current budget before the aldermen that you presented in April still be the budget in front of the aldermen when the new collective bargaining agreement comes before the BMA?

Dr. Livingston replied yes.

Alderman Corriveau stated so regardless of a new teacher contract, the \$160.5 million or so I believe was the budget voted on by the school board that you presented last month, remains the board of school committee's and your assessment of your budget's needs for the upcoming fiscal year.

Dr. Livingston replied yes.

Alderman Corriveau stated though we're not dealing in numbers I suppose this is a hypothetical question, so if you have to give a hypothetical answer I understand. The savings realized through the new teacher contract, and I know this will be a discussion you'll be having at the school board next week, but would it be your goal to have those new or realized savings be applied toward anything in particular? Might it be hiring more teachers, might it be facilities improvements, technology improvements? I understand if you have to answer hypothetically because we have a lot of moving parts right now. What are your thoughts on that?

Dr. Livingston responded I would ask Ms. DeFrancis to answer that.

Ms. DeFrancis stated our recommendation, if there are any savings, would be that it be put into an expendable trust to help pay for the future three years of that particular contract.

Alderman Corriveau stated so the savings would go into a trust. You wouldn't be operating under the current budget presented to the aldermen for future parts of the contract?

Ms. DeFrancis replied of the MEA contract, yes.

Alderman Shaw stated I just want to commend the school district on their budget this year. I think they did an excellent job. I think the projections and the looking forward in our schools is very important, that our education system remain and move forward to be the best that we can make it, and I think that it has been long overdue for our schools. Many of our schools need some cosmetic work, they need some interior changes, there are things that need to be done in the schools and I think we're now on the road to making those facilities be the way they should be, to have the proper number of teachers in the classrooms, to lower the number of students in the classrooms, and I think that that all leads to more than an adequate education, which is what we all strive for. I hope that when these savings are realized that they are put in a trust, but I think part of it should be put into a trust that may be utilized at some point because you are getting rid of the portables by 2017 and you're going to be looking for space and you're going to need space. All of these things are very important for our school district, and I think that the money should stay with the school district and the money should be spent wisely and I know it will. Thank you.

Alderman Corriveau stated just as a point of clarification I know there was just a little question about what the budget summary was from the school district. It was \$160,062,680 and that is the number with the aldermen right now. Is that correct?

Ms. DeFrancis replied that's correct.

Alderman Corriveau stated the City and school budgets have to be adopted by June 10<sup>th</sup> so before we end discussion on this item does the committee want to readdress the budget issue anytime in the next couple of weeks. I imagine that would be after it comes to the board of school committee and they forward a proposal to the aldermen. Barring that, I don't know if there's anything left for us to discuss.

Alderman Shaw stated I see no need.

Alderman Corriveau stated okay. Thank you very much for the information Dr. Livingston.

4. [Discussion regarding the creation of a school facilities plan.](#)

Alderman Corriveau stated I suppose I'll hand things off to School Committee Member Staub but this item did come up at the end of our last term and I suppose the timing is quite good because Monday the board of school committee voted to eliminate all portables by the summer of 2017. According to reports in the press that means there's approximately 28,000 square feet of brick and mortar classrooms that we need to find somehow. Maybe this discussion is quite timely. In our agenda we included a recommendation from last year's audit regarding the development of a comprehensive long-term facilities plan. The audit essentially found that budget pressures have resulted in the extension of a deferred maintenance schedule leading toward more frequent system failures. While systems of preventative maintenance are used in the district they are not systematically applied, and the purpose of the plan would be to represent a pre-established, predictable, credible response to changing facility needs developed by a wide range of community stakeholders and endorsed by major constituencies of

the community. I know that the board of school committee has taken action to eliminate portables, and I suppose the first question would be whether this committee should get to work on the development of a long-term facilities plan. Secondly, how does that dovetail with the board of school committee's recent decision to eliminate portable classrooms?

School Committee Member Staub stated when the audit first came back, I happened to be a member of the building and sites committee. In this term I am not on building and sites but Erica Connor still remains on that committee. The committee took the recommendations from the audit that we had done last year and one of the recommendations was to develop a strategic plan. That committee is now developing a strategic plan that includes the portables but is also looking at other things so it is part of a broader plan. I have not been to those meetings recently, so I don't know if Erica wants to add anything more to that. I also see that Mr. O'Maley is here and he can give you the background information on what the portables are going to cost us to keep them maintained and in good repair. Also, there are safety considerations to be thought about. For example, when there's a lockdown and there are children outside the building in these portables, it is not the optimum situation for students. Dr. Livingston has also been working with Aramark to help develop this long-range plan for the facilities in the schools. I don't know if Erica has anything more to add, and I certainly would like to have Mr. O'Maley come up and give us the details about the conditions of the portables and some of the other things he sees as priorities in the school district.

School Committee Member Connors stated School Committee Member Staub is right; the committee is currently working on a long-range facilities plan in conjunction with Mr. O'Maley. There is also a committee that should be a joint facilities committee between the school board and aldermen where I believe this would go to next from the building and sites committee on the school board.

Mr. Kevin O'Maley, Chief Facilities, stated we've met a couple of times with the buildings and sites committee. There are really two components to this the way I look at it, and I've been working with Ms. DeFrancis on actually incorporating this in a policy. There is kind of a capital improvement strategic plan and that would come along with adding probably additions to the building or major renovations or that type of thing, and there's another component where we're doing what they call a facilities condition assessment, and that really has more to do with the maintenance and repair as opposed to the capital improvement or building renovations. We're actually going to look out about 25 years. We have a good inventory of what the building envelopes are and the building equipment and that type of thing, so there are standards that say a roof has a useful life of 20 or 25 years and we'll start projecting, based on the age of this equipment, when it will start falling apart so that the school board and this committee can see a projection of basically if we don't do anything, how long would it take us to get to whatever, a \$30 million project or to just get the buildings back to a maintainable position. We've also recommended to the building and sites committee and Ms. DeFrancis that on the capital side for building renovations and those types of things, we should probably be looking out five to eight years. I've called a number of my colleagues and I've talked to a number of the larger cities and the bigger municipalities across the state and they all do this and there are a lot of similarities to what was recommended in the policy and what some of these bigger cities are doing. There's a committee like this, especially where the school board doesn't have taxing authority. They have a committee like this where we can basically all agree on a plan, all this information is baked into school board budgets, and all those things just flow a little bit more naturally, so there could potentially be votes on things and would be votes on approval on things that could happen two years from now, three years from now instead of what is the kind of issue de jour coming up that we need to wrestle with. Relative to the portables, the portables at



all of the schools, except I would make an exception at MST, definitely need to go. We do need to have further discussion on the portables at MST relative to the new educational program that they have at that school. We'll be talking about that. I believe that's on the next building and sites agenda. If we do eliminate the portables, there is a material amount of savings relative to energy that we wouldn't be spending anymore. The question always comes up that if we don't have the portables, there's maintenance that we're not doing on those either and I would agree with that, however, I would also say that we were really never given any money to maintain the portables in the first place. There is definitely some opportunity there that we can take advantage of. How that impacts the school district by eliminating that 28,000 square feet, I would defer to school administration on what the plan is, but as you can see, all these pieces of this puzzle fit together with long-term capital planning, eliminating the portables, deferred maintenance and all those types of things.

Alderman Corriveau asked Dr. Livingston, is there a timeline for when this long-term facilities plan might be put into action for review from the board of school committee and the aldermen?

Dr. Livingston replied I'd want to defer that question to Mr. O'Maley or Ms. DeFrancis because I don't remember if we said that there was an exact date when we would begin it.

Alderman Corriveau asked do either of you sort of have an estimate? Obviously it's a work in progress.

Mr. O'Maley responded tomorrow would be soon enough for me, but going through the exercise with the building and sites committee and the school board, I think that's going to take some time. It's really about developing the priorities.

We've talked about enclosing the classrooms at Beech and Webster as being the next priority, I've heard conversations about if we eliminate the portables at MST we would need to put an addition on there, I've heard about kindergarten and maybe some facility needs for that. I don't think we'll have it all resolved the first go around, but I think that we should definitely have something in place. Normally when we start to talk about capital things, it seems like it's in November of the year as we start to gear up for budget season and those types of things. I would recommend that we probably start that as soon as the summer is over.

Alderman Corriveau asked would you need to start that this summer in order to meet the deadline of the summer of 2017?

Mr. O'Maley replied yes, we would start that but again I don't know what the school administration's needs are relative to square footage. I would venture a guess that we could probably eliminate some portables, as has been done already, some of them sit vacant, and we might not need to do anything at some of those schools. It is really school administration's decision if we're going to eliminate 10,000 square feet at Beech, for example, what we are going to do about that. Again, when you look at this like a puzzle, it kind of all fits together because theoretically I would say that if we're going to enclose the classrooms at Beech, simultaneously we could probably do some renovations in the basement, and simultaneously we could get rid of the portables. Again, it all kind of fits together.

Alderman Shaw stated I don't think that is something we should be handling as a committee here. I think we should get updates on a monthly basis or every two months or something like that. But I think this is definitely building and sites, its administration, it's our facilities working with administration. I think it is in their purview where they go and how they do it and at what pace they approach this. Obviously we're all on the same page. I think by giving us, as a joint committee

here, updates on a regular basis then we can have input from that respect but I really don't think we are the ones that would be doing these projections or these studies. This is school related, and I think we're sort of in an advisory position in this committee and when we get updates then we can relate how we feel about the progress or whatever and ask questions and be informed so we can share it with our respective teams. I don't think that it's our purview to do the actual work.

Alderman Corriveau responded understood, and I agree.

Alderman Shea stated my thoughts ran along the line of hers, but there are certain things that maybe we can inject. My thoughts went along the lines that you'd have to get the number of students that are impacted before you begin, and the sites of the present portables vis-à-vis whether these relate to the schools or whether there could be other schools where you could concentrate on those children that are in the portables so that you wouldn't be adding additions to schools that really don't need that. That would be another focus, and then the phasing out of the portables vis-à-vis the total elimination. In other words, whether it would make sense to phase them out in a manner that would be logical and would be financially feasible rather than trying to close them all at once and finding out that all of a sudden we have to put some children back in there simply because we don't have the room. I think that because it's going to be phased out supposedly in the year 2017, there is that time that you can work together and there are a multitude of other ideas and thoughts that haven't even occurred to either us or them. I would say that would be the best, but this committee really should not be doing anything. As Alderman Shaw indicated, just being brought up to bear because the sites committee and the other members of the school administration know pretty much what the needs are. I think how to get the funding is important. Do you bond it or do you try to do something else with whatever resources are available? Those would be my thoughts.

Alderman Shaw asked is there a joint building and sites committee?

Alderman Corriveau replied yes and they will have total jurisdiction over the matter. This committee just has an oversight function and obviously school buildings are owned and maintained by the City in agreement with the school district. Karen, with all of that being the case, maybe we can get an update from you when you begin the process at the end of the summer with Dr. Livingston and can kind of outline where you're going a few months from now.

*There being no further business, on motion of **School Committee Member Staub**, duly seconded by, **Alderman Shea**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Clerk of Committee